

METROPOLITAN DADE COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD

DESIGNATION REPORT - INDIVIDUAL SITE

Site Name Palm Lodge

Designation No. 9327

Date of Filing 11/21/83

Date of Designation 12/16/83

Site Address 17390 S.W. 296th Street, Homestead, Fl. 33030

Owner and Address Mr. and Mrs. George G. Bow, 17390 S.W. 296th Street, Homestead, FL 33030

JOHN OGDEN & MARYANNE BIGGAR 248-0340

Site Location - Legal description or district boundaries (see attached map):

The N 300' of the W 165' of the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Sec. 7, T. 57 S., R. 39 E., less the N 25' for road.

Dade County Historic Survey Findings:

Other Surveys:

H.A.B.S.

This structure received a rating of 2 in architecture, 1 in history, and 2 in contextual significance.

Natl. Reg.

H.A.E.R.

Other:

Title Verification (attach copy): Book 10568 Page No. 710 Deed Type Warranty

Current Zoning (describe): EU1 - 1 acre estates

Current Use (describe): Residential

Current Condition (describe): Excellent

Special Standards for Certificate of Appropriateness:

Impacts - Impact of the designation on proposed public improvements, renewal projects or private development.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends the designation of Palm Lodge as an individual historic site.

Physical Description of Site (attach 1 or 2 photos):

The Palm Lodge is a large, two story house of frame vernacular construction, built on a rectangular plan, T-shaped at the rear. The wood frame structure has a broad, truncated hip roof, with a gable over the rear portion. The roof's wide eaves terminate in diagonally cut rafters. A wide porch across the whole front, five bays wide and five steps off the ground, has a low hip roof supported on columns of Classical inspiration. Horizontal weatherboards are used as exterior facing. Roofs are covered in metal novelty shingles. The central doorway across the front porch consists of a wood door with a single light transom and ornate side lights. Directly above, three windows are grouped together on the central bay of the second story. Windows are wood double hung sash, one over one lights, with jalousies used where the older units have been replaced.

The Palm Lodge is simple and elegant, of spacious proportions and sober detail. The tall royal palms across the front on Avocado Drive and the well landscaped approach contribute to the understated beauty of the estate.

Significance - Brief summary including documentary evidence that indicates the historical, architectural or archeological significance of the site.

The residential structure known as Palm Lodge, located at 17390 S.W. 296th Street (Avocado Drive), is both historically and architecturally significant. It is historically significant for its association with several prominent Homestead pioneer families. It is architecturally significant for its southern influenced style (See Physical Description).

Palm Lodge was built ca. 1912 for Colonel Henry Wallace Johnston and his family which included Rose Lee, his wife; and Hugh and Carrie Belle, their children. A hardware merchant from Lebanon, Kentucky, Colonel Johnston, upon first arriving to this area, had thought, "I could see a great future, but I wondered how I could make a living in a land so different from Kentucky."¹ Soon, however, Colonel Johnston found his call in this tropical climate, becoming a well-respected horticulturist and floriculturist.

In 1912, Colonel Johnston purchased 40 acres of land on Avocado Drive from the Campbell family. The Campbells were homesteaders who had arrived to this area near the turn of the century. The Campbell family was large and many of its members figure in the early history of Homestead.

On his newly acquired acreage, Colonel Johnston had a large residence built which came to be known as Palm Lodge. On the land surrounding the structure, Colonel Johnston's Tropical Groves came into existence. Here, specimens of tropical fruits and flowers which Colonel Johnston had begun collecting were planted. Subsequently, a packing house and a canning house were added to the complex.

Eventually, 267 kinds of jellies, jams, marmalades and preserves were being readied for market and shipped from Palm Lodge Tropical Groves. One of Colonel Johnston's specialties became the aloe vera plant. Leaves from the plant were prepared for sale, its extract prescribed as a cure for many ailments. The aloe extract was sold to cosmetic and pharmaceutical firms.

The reputation of Palm Lodge Tropical Groves grew as a showcase of tropical plants and flowers. By 1939, more than 8,000 kinds of plants could be found at Colonel Johnston's place, attracting worldwide attention. At this time, it was reported that Palm Lodge was visited by more than 30,000 people yearly. Mr. Johnston remarked:

I have had Kurds from Asia, and Indian potentate with a retinue of servants, Arabs from Bagdad and Damascus, a doctor from Tripoli, an English lord from London, Henry Ford and botanists from so many schools and counties that long ago I gave up recording their home ports or for what specific purpose they came.

This Redlands area is tropical country and I don't mean sub-tropical either, for it has the same climate as Haiti and Yucatan. Practically everything can be grown here that is found in either of these countries and I have proved that not only to my own satisfaction but to the convincing of those who have been skeptical about my ability to do it.²

Colonel Johnston's daughter, Carrie Belle, had married Albert R. Caves in 1913. Mr. Caves was the son of Robert E. Caves and Martha Frances Horne. It is said that together with the Campbells, members of the Caves and Horne families made up half of Homestead's early settlers.

Upon Colonel Johnston's death in 1947, Palm Lodge passed into the hands of his daughter and son-in-law. It continued to operate as before, becoming known as Caves Palm Lodge. Over the years, several tracts from the original 40 acres were sold and consequently the Tropical Groves ceased operation. Today, Palm Lodge lies on approximately seven acres and the two-story, eighteen-room house is occupied by Mr. and Mrs. George Bow. Mrs. Bow is the daughter of Albert and Carrie Belle Caves. Mr. Bow is the grandson of Lily Lawrence Bow who helped found the Homestead Public Library in 1935.

Palm Lodge, which has remained within the same family throughout its existence, is very significant to the history of Homestead. Its connection with Homestead's notable families and its international recognition make Palm Lodge a unique historical site. Furthermore, the structure's elegant and classical lines and its excellent condition make it a very fine example of frame vernacular architecture in South Dade County.

FOOTNOTES:

¹'Men Who Make Florida,' newspaper clipping at the Historical Association of Southern Florida, ca. 1939.

²Ibid.

Bibliographic References:

Caves, Albert R. Obituary, The Miami Herald, July 27, 1980.

Caves, Bunny. Personal Interview (by Mary-Jane Tucker, Madelyn Ivey, Lisa de Parle), Homestead, May, 1980.

Dade County, FL. Recorder's Office, Deed Abstract Book 10568, p. 710.

Dade County, FL. Recorder's Office, Plat Book Volume 6, p. 20.

'Men Who Make Florida,' newspaper clipping at the Historical Association of Southern Florida, ca. 1939.

Schumacher, Carl. Personal Interview (by Lisa de Parle, Claudia Jardot, Lenna Taylor), Florida City, June, 1980.

Taylor, Jean. Telephone Interview (by Maria T. Temkin), Miami, November, 1983.

Draft Resolution Designating the Property:

Whereas, Palm Lodge, built ca. 1912, is a fine example of southern influenced frame vernacular architecture, and

Whereas, Palm Lodge is historically significant for its association with several prominent Homestead pioneer families, and

Whereas, Palm Lodge's Tropical Groves achieved international recognition as a showcase of tropical fruits and flowers, and

Whereas, the preservation of historic buildings is in the best interest of Dade County and its citizens, and

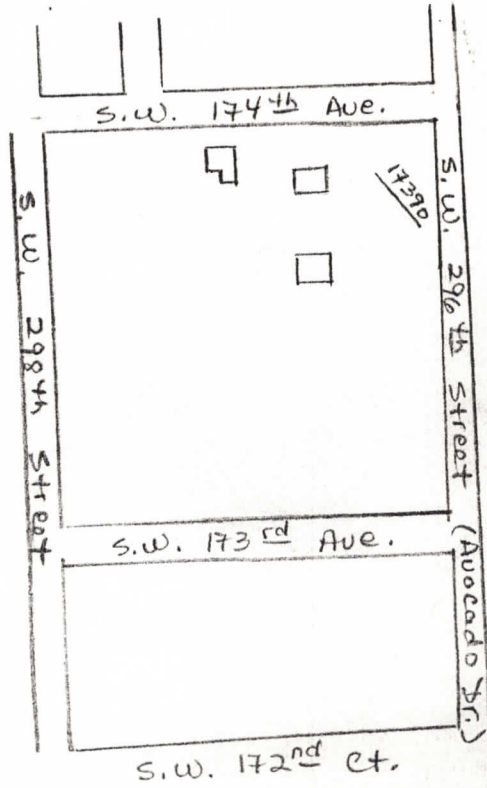
Whereas, Palm Lodge, is located in the N 300' of the W 165' of the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Sec. 7, T. 57 S., R. 39 E., less the N 25' for road,

Now, therefore, be it resolved that the Historic Preservation Board on Thursday, December 15, 1983, has designated Palm Lodge as an individual historic site pursuant to the Metropolitan Dade County Historic Preservation Ordinance (81-13) and that Palm Lodge is subject to all rights, privileges and requirements of that ordinance.

Designation is approved as evidenced by the signature of the Historic Preservation Board Chairman.

PALM LODGE

17390 S.W. 296th Street



Palm Lodge
17390 S.W. 296th St.